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Pro-immigration Canada

Social and Economic Roots of Popular Views

Jeffrey G. Reitz

Majority Canadian support for high levels of immigration has been remarkably stable over time, and it is underpinned by belief in immigration as an economic benefit and pride in Canadian multiculturalism.

Le soutien d'une majorité de Canadiens à un fort taux d'immigration s'est révélé remarquablement constant au fil des années ; il repose sur la conviction que l'immigration est porteuse d'avantages économiques et sur la fierté qu'inspire le multiculturalisme canadien.

Diversité, immigration et intégration
Diversity, Immigration and Integration

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Summary

Most Canadians support the longstanding high rates of immigration, and few see immigration as one of Canada's most significant problems. Majority Canadian support for high levels of immigration has been remarkably stable over time and relatively unaffected by recessions, the threat of terrorism and negative reports on specific immigrant groups. This study assesses recent trends in public attitudes and then examines the social and economic roots of support for high immigration based on an analysis of the Environics Focus Canada opinion survey conducted in November 2010.

Two important sources of pro-immigration sentiment are belief in immigration as an economic benefit and pride in Canadian multiculturalism. These perceptions reinforce each other, and both have broader roots. The perception of economic benefit — prevalent in all regions, including Quebec — reflects general economic optimism and personal economic success. Those who feel multiculturalism is important to Canadian identity are significantly more likely to support current immigration levels. In that regard, the survey data show that support for multiculturalism is rooted in a broader, socially progressive agenda that includes issues such as gay rights and gun control, which themselves reinforce pro-immigration attitudes. Nevertheless, many Canadians would like immigrants to blend into society rather than form separate communities; however, pride in multiculturalism helps to allay this concern.

The evidence also suggests that many of these issues are seen in terms of Canada's difference from the US, providing further reinforcement of the links to national identity. All of Canada's federal political parties have pro-immigration policies; however, Conservative Party supporters more often have reservations about current immigration levels based on attitudes toward multiculturalism and broader social values. All in all, the multiple supports for immigration may help account for the stability of public opinion over time, providing a buffer against anti-immigration trends.

Résumé

La majorité des Canadiens sont favorables aux taux d'immigration historiquement élevés, et peu d'entre eux considèrent l'immigration comme un problème sérieux pour le pays. Ce soutien majoritaire s'est révélé remarquablement constant au fil du temps et a été assez peu entamé par les récessions, la menace terroriste et des descriptions négatives faites de certains groupes immigrants. Cette étude retrace l'évolution des attitudes de la population puis examine les racines économiques et sociales du soutien à une immigration forte à partir de l'analyse d'un sondage Focus Canada d'Environics réalisé en novembre 2010.

Selon cette analyse, ce sont la vision d'une immigration porteuse d'avantages économiques et la fierté suscitée par le multiculturalisme canadien qui constituent deux sources clés du sentiment pro-immigration. Or elles se renforcent mutuellement tout en ayant des racines plus étendues. La perception selon laquelle l'immigration génère des bénéfices économiques domine dans toutes les régions du pays — y compris au Québec — et témoigne d'une vision généralement optimiste de l'économie et d'une réussite financière personnelle. Par ailleurs, les Canadiens qui jugent que le multiculturalisme constitue une part importante de leur identité sont plus susceptibles de soutenir les taux d'immigration actuels. Selon les données du sondage, cette attitude s'inscrit dans un programme socialement progressiste englobant des mesures comme les droits des homosexuels et le contrôle des armes à feu, ce qui, en retour, consolide le sentiment pro-immigration. Si de nombreux Canadiens souhaitent que les immigrants s'intègrent davantage à la société et ne forment pas de communautés distinctes, la fierté que leur inspire le multiculturalisme tempère l'inquiétude qu'ils pourraient avoir à ce sujet.

Les données indiquent aussi que plusieurs de ces éléments sont perçus comme des points de démarcation entre le Canada et les États-Unis, et ils renforcent donc le rapport des Canadiens à l'identité nationale. À noter que si tous les partis politiques fédéraux mettent de l'avant des politiques favorables à l'immigration, les Canadiens qui soutiennent le Parti conservateur se montrent souvent plus réservés face aux taux d'immigration actuels, comme en fait foi leur attitude à l'égard du multiculturalisme et des valeurs sociales élargies. Quoi qu'il en soit, les facettes multiples du soutien à l'immigration pourraient expliquer la stabilité de l'opinion publique au fil des années et la prémunir contre les tendances anti-immigration.

Pro-immigration Canada: Social and Economic Roots of Popular Views

Jeffrey G. Reitz

Canada, a country that has traditionally welcomed immigrants, has remained strongly pro-immigration. This is reflected in policies mandating comparatively high immigration levels and in the fact that public opinion generally supports immigration. Clearly, Canada is an exception to the negative attitude toward immigration that prevails in most other industrialized countries, an attitude that has received much attention, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France. Canada's exceptionalism when it comes to immigration is reflected in cross-national comparisons of public opinion presented recently in a report by the German Marshall Fund (2011) (see figure 1), which also indicated that Canadians were more likely to see immigration as an opportunity than as a problem. A 23-country Ipsos poll released in August 2011 (Ipsos 2011) again confirmed a marked Canadian exceptionalism.

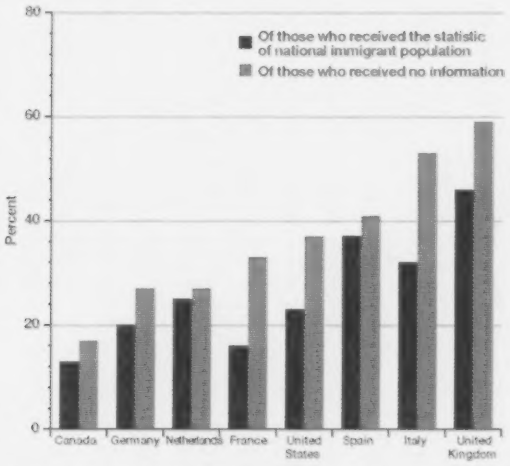
What accounts for Canadian attitudes to immigration? To determine the answer, this study examines available Canadian public opinion data, including trend data, and offers a detailed analysis of a Focus Canada opinion survey conducted by the Environics Institute in November 2010. The study attempts to clarify the social bases of popular support for high immigration levels in Canada and considers political party cleavages and potential sources or processes of change. Such an analysis may help us to understand why the opposition to immigration seen in other countries is not more prominent in Canada, and whether there are any indications that Canadian attitudes have begun to turn in a more negative direction or might do so in the future.

Canadian immigration levels, significant throughout the nation's history, have been particularly high for the past 20 years. During this period, Canada has accepted about 250,000 permanent immigrants annually, representing between 0.7 and 0.8 percent of the total population (see figure 2). The figure for 2010 was the highest in 50 years: more than 280,000 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011). As a result of its relatively high immigration levels, Canada has a substantially larger foreign-born population than the United States and most European countries (United Nations 2009). Much of this immigration has been concentrated in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Since 2000, Toronto alone has accepted between 80,000 and 125,000 new immigrants each year, making it one of the most immigrant-intensive large cities in the world.

In Canada, there has been remarkably widespread acceptance of, and popular support for, such mass immigration and relatively little of the acrimonious debate seen elsewhere. Public opinion polls (to be examined in more detail later) show that, almost without exception, in recent decades a majority of the Canadian population has either supported immigration levels or wanted them increased. In most other countries the reverse is true: there is less immigration,

and a majority still wants reductions. Most telling, there is rarely any debate on immigration during Canadian election campaigns. All Canadian political parties espouse pro-immigration policies, and the public rarely asks them to defend these policies. The word "immigration" is seldom if ever mentioned in the nationally televised leaders' debates. In the party leaders' debate preceding the May 2011 election, a voter posed a question on immigration and multiculturalism. Each of the four prime ministerial candidates attempted to adopt the most pro-immigration position, defending policies that aimed to facilitate immigration and promote the interests of immigrants in Canada. The pervasiveness in Canada of positive views of immigration is demonstrated by the fact that not only is immigration supported in parts of the country that have a strong need for immigrants to meet their labour demands — major urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver — but it is also supported in regions where the economy is weaker and immigrants are sought as an economic stimulant. In this regard, provincial government investment in immigrant recruitment has been particularly evident in the Atlantic and Prairie regions.

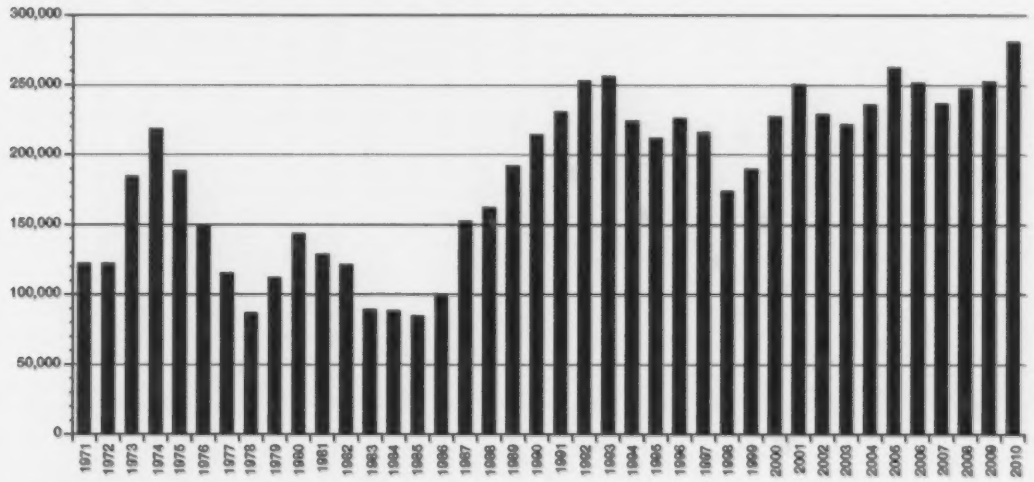
Figure 1: Respondents who said there are "too many" immigrants in their country, 2010



Source: German Marshall Fund of the United States (2011, 7).

There are immigration critics in Canada, but even they can turn out to be pro-immigration by international standards. For example, Daniel Stoffman, in his book *Who Gets In: What's Wrong with Canada's Immigration Program — And How to Fix It*

Figure 2: Number of immigrants arriving in Canada, 1971 to 2010



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2003, 2005, 2009b, 2010c).
Note: Figures for 2010 are provisional and subject to change.

(2002), proposes that the number of immigrants to Canada be reduced to about 175,000 per year. On a per capita basis, this would amount to 0.5 percent of the population per year, which is still higher than the figures advocated by supporters of immigration in other countries. If Canada were to implement Stoffman's proposal, it would still be one of the industrial world's leading pro-immigration countries.

Immigration has both economic and social aspects, and the following analysis shows how Canadian opinion on both aspects bolsters support for the current high immigration levels. It suggests that the two pillars of support for immigration in Canada — namely, positive perceptions of the economic impact of immigration; and multiculturalism, which moderates concerns about the social and cultural integration of immigrants — work together to support and stabilize a predominantly positive overall view of immigration. Following a review of the public discourse on these two aspects of immigration and recent trends in public opinion, I will examine the Environics Focus Canada 2010 survey to assess economic and social attitudes on immigration and their relation to broader viewpoints and issues.

Economic and Social Issues in Public Opinion on Immigration

Public policies address both the economic and sociocultural impacts of immigration. However, it seems that the positive effects of each have been threatened by recent trends and events. A bit of background on this will help to provide a context for the analysis of public opinion that follows.

The economic benefit of immigration to Canada has been a major argument in favour of sustaining high immigration levels. Immigration is thought to stimulate economic development and boost employment. As well, immigrants pay taxes and help support public services such as health care, and this suport will become increasingly important in offsetting the effects of population aging. Opponents of immigration argue that its economic benefits are exaggerated and that immigrants depress wage levels, undercutting native-born workers. They also suggest that immigrants often rely on welfare and become a significant economic burden for the country.

Since the late 1960s, both Liberal and Conservative governments have employed the points-based selection system, which weighs employment prospects and skills as an important policy tool for ensuring that immigration has a positive economic impact. Since the 1990s, this policy approach has emphasized formal education, so the education levels of recent cohorts have been quite high. The proportion of immigrants with bachelor's degrees has nearly doubled from about 25 percent in the early 1990s to about 45 percent since 2001 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2003, 2005, 2009b, 2010c). As well, the government's ability to manage immigration in a way that enhances economic benefits is undoubtedly aided by a comparative lack of illegal immigration, due in large part to the geographic isolation of Canada from all countries other than the United States.

Whether immigration does in fact benefit the economy, and what the size of any such benefit might be, are matters of debate among economists. Many US economists believe that the benefit tends to be small, although the specifics are debated (see, for example, Card 2005; Borjas

2006). For Canada, one might expect that selection policies and higher immigrant incomes would produce a more positive outcome. However, most analyses are fairly guarded. Two decades ago, a report by the Economic Council of Canada (1991), still frequently cited, concluded that a small benefit applies to Canada. In support of a more substantial positive economic impact, the government brings forward evidence that the points-based selection system has translated into a considerable degree of employment success for immigrants (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 1998, 2010b). Positive employment outcomes for skill-selected immigrants may support the perception that immigration has a positive economic impact, and that only minimal social costs and expenditures must be absorbed in order to maintain the welfare state. As well, the children of highly educated immigrants from China, India and other Asian countries, and from Latin America and the Caribbean, have themselves become highly educated and have attained employment success (Reitz, Zhang, and Hawkins 2011).

Yet the trends toward worsening employment outcomes for the most recent cohorts of immigrants may be threatening the economy-positive image of immigration. Such trends have been evident since the late 1990s (Reitz 1998) and are fully documented in a series of government and academic studies (Reitz 2001; Frenette and Morissette 2003; Aydemir and Skuterud 2005; see also an overview by Reitz 2007). In public discourse, this issue has been reflected most prominently in the controversy over immigrant skill underutilization and "brain waste"; myriad public policies have been created to address it, such as credential assessment to help immigrants document Canadian equivalence for their education, greater regulation of professional licensing agencies (at least in Ontario) and bridge-training programs to top up foreign-acquired credentials to meet Canadian standards.

Another approach to understanding the economic impact of immigration is to examine the impact of immigration on public expenditures. Studies such as those by Akbari (1995) and by Siklos and Marr (1998) have concluded that immigration is not a major burden (however, see Grubel 2009; and Grubel and Grady 2011). A recent study based on the application of a macroeconomic simulation model (Dungan, Gunderson, and Fang 2010) suggests that immigration has a net positive effect on public expenditures. More generally, the study also suggests that, although there is a small negative effect of immigration on economic production per capita, this would turn positive if labour market barriers experienced by immigrants were eliminated.

Adding to economic concerns about immigrants is the strong negative reaction to small numbers of illegal immigrants from Asia arriving in boats off the coast of British Columbia. Some Canadians have expressed fear that human smuggling, including the smuggling of possible terrorists (for example, the case of the Tamils who arrived in BC waters in August 2010), is becoming more common. And there is the continuing controversy over possible abuses of the refugee determination system and a belief that many refugee claimants are simply immigration queue jumpers. Clearly, these developments could begin to undermine the prevailing positive economic views of immigration.

Partly in response to negative labour market trends, the federal government has introduced a number of significant policy changes designed to help immigrants find employment more

quickly and to enhance the economic impact (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2007a, 2008, 2009a, 2010a; see also Finance Canada 2006, 49, 50). The number of temporary foreign workers admitted has increased sharply, from 116,540 in 2000 to 182,276 in 2010; many of those admitted in recent years have been expected to find work in less-skilled occupations (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010b, 78; 2011). The Canada Experience Class, introduced in 2008, offers higher-skilled temporary workers opportunities to gain permanent status. In the traditional points-based selection scheme, there has been a shift in selection criteria to place greater weight on official language knowledge and experience in particular occupations officially listed as being in current demand. There has also been an increased role for provinces to nominate as immigrants those whom they believe will contribute most to meeting local needs. Whether all these changes will prove effective in the long run is debatable. One issue is the effect that an increased inflow of temporary foreign workers combined with inadequate provision for visa enforcement could have on the size of Canada's non-status immigrant population (see Reitz 2010). These innovations may ultimately strengthen the positive view of immigration's economic contribution; however, they do introduce a greater uncertainty because their impact is not yet known.

On the social and cultural side, Canada's policy of multiculturalism, introduced in 1971, could create a more positive view of immigration for several reasons. First and most obviously, it could do so by promoting recognition of minority cultures; multiculturalism encourages the view that immigration has a cultural as well as an economic benefit. Second, and possibly related to this, multiculturalism policy promotes the idea that if immigrant minority groups retain their cultures it does not necessarily mean that they will not share in Canadian cultural values and become good Canadians. A basic tenet of multiculturalism — reflected in the initial statement of multiculturalism policy by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1971 — is that social integration and cultural retention do not stand in opposition to one another; in fact, they are expected to occur at the same time.[1] A third way that multiculturalism policy could encourage a positive view of immigration is by facilitating greater social inclusion for immigrants and their children, smoothing their integration and yielding both sociocultural and economic benefits. A fourth way could be by simply asserting multiculturalism as a national policy; this could create a perception of immigration as an essential feature of the Canadian tradition and thus a point of national pride. In this way, multiculturalism policy can serve as a kind of public relations campaign for immigration.

Multiculturalism has become part of the Canadian identity, as stressed by Environics pollster Michael Adams (2007). Environics asked Canadians in 1985 to describe what made them most proud of their country and found that multiculturalism ranked tenth on the list. They asked the question again in 2006 and determined that multiculturalism had climbed to second place (Adams 2007, 20). Multiculturalism is, according to Adams, nothing short of "the Canadian Dream" (2007, 41). On this point, the Environics poll agrees with most others (for an analysis of data over several decades, see Dasko 2005), including the November 2010 Angus Reid poll in which 55 percent of respondents regarded multiculturalism as good for Canada and 30 percent regarded it as bad (Angus Reid Public Opinion 2010).

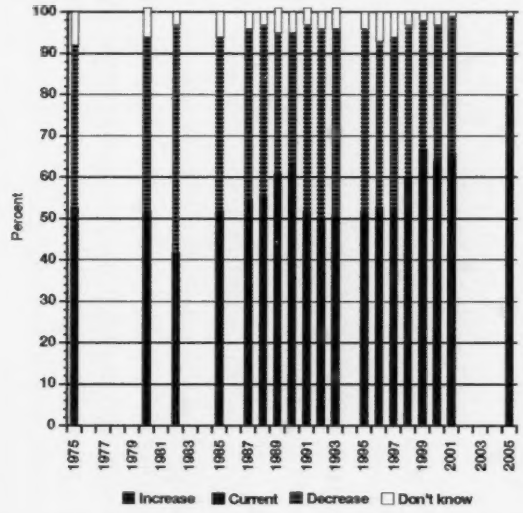
Enthusiasm for multiculturalism was always somewhat cooler in Quebec, reflecting the political dynamics between French and English Canada at the time the policy was introduced. The re-emergence of national identity in Quebec during the 1960s raised issues of culture as well as language. Multiculturalism was chosen instead of biculturalism to accommodate ethnocultural and immigrant groups, leaving many Quebecers feeling that their interests had been downgraded (Breton 1986, especially 267-71). As a result, while the Quebec government policy of interculturalism has many similarities to multiculturalism — including the fact that it seeks to create a climate respectful of diverse cultures — it assigns priority to defending the French language and culture, necessarily displacing, to a degree, the question of recognition for other cultures (Bouchard 2011). Still, Quebec has its own immigrant selection system (dating from the 1970s), which provides it with tools to pursue linguistic and cultural goals.

Clearly, multiculturalism has never guaranteed the smooth integration of immigrants. In particular, the issues of racial difference and visible minorities became prominent in the 1980s, since the elimination of discriminatory selection criteria in 1962 led to a shift from predominantly European to about 80 percent non-European immigrants by the 1990s (Reitz 2007, 47-8). Multiculturalism was initially introduced without reference to racial issues; however, such issues were eventually acknowledged in a report to Parliament, *Equality Now!* (House of Commons Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society 1984), and an explicit antiracism component was added to multiculturalism policy. Still, racial issues remain a possible threat to support for immigration in Canada.

Even where racism is not in question, opponents of immigration in Canada, as elsewhere, have argued that some immigrants bring cultural standards that are incompatible with national traditions, and that immigrant groups tend to isolate themselves in enclaves, detracting from national unity (Bramadat and Seljak 2005; Seljak 2007). These issues appear, at least in the media, to have intensified in recent years, particularly in relation to Muslim immigrants, the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the ensuing "war on terror" and violence in a number of European countries. Particularly in the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom, the result has been a much-publicized repudiation of multiculturalism by political leaders.

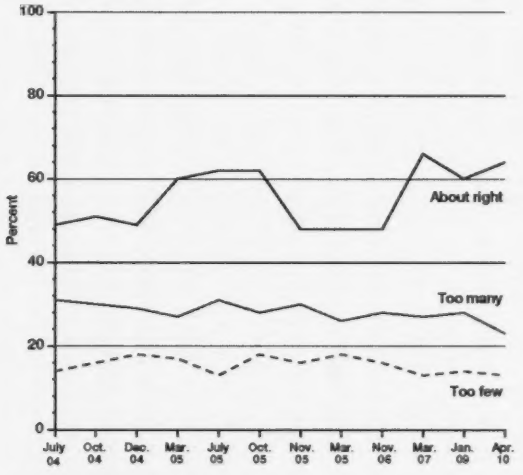
Are such concerns likely to turn Canada away from multiculturalism and have negative implications for traditional pro-immigration attitudes? Although multiculturalism is now embodied in legislation and enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, some suggest that Canada has already begun to disengage. The minister responsible for both citizenship and immigration, Jason Kenney, while expressing a commitment to multiculturalism, has introduced policies, such as a revised citizenship test and information booklet, that emphasize more strongly to immigrants that they are required to adopt Canadian values. These policy changes could enhance support for immigration by addressing public concerns about immigrant cultural differences, or they could undermine support for immigration by displacing multiculturalism as an important public relations element.

Figure 3: Canadian public opinion on immigration levels, 1975 to 2005: Gallup Canada



Source: Gallup Canada (2001).
Note: The question asked was: "If it were your job to plan an immigration policy for Canada at this time, would you be inclined to increase immigration, decrease immigration, or keep the number of immigrants at about the current level?"

Figure 4: Canadian public opinion on immigration levels, 2004 to 2010: EKOS Research



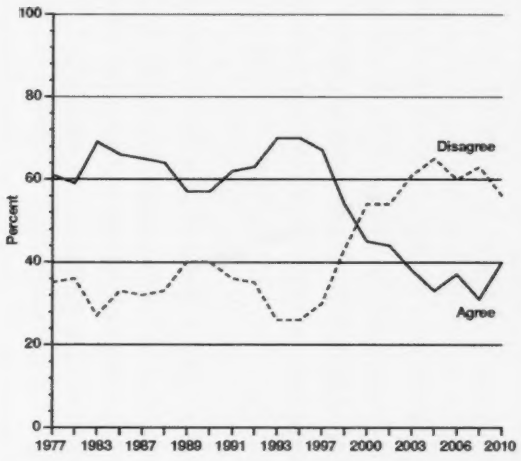
Source: EKOS Research (2010, 4).
Note: The question asked was: "In your opinion, do you feel there are too many, too few, or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?"

Trends in Canadian Attitudes toward Immigration

A review of public opinion polls conducted in Canada over recent decades clearly shows strong support for high immigration levels. Two published time series are particularly instructive. In most years between 1975 and 2005, Gallup Canada asked nationally representative samples of Canadians this question: "If it were your job to plan an immigration policy for Canada at this time, would you be inclined to increase immigration, decrease immigration, or keep the number of immigrants at about the current level?" In every year but one (1982, a recession year), most respondents said they would support either keeping the number of immigrants at the current level or increasing it (see figure 3). In fact, the highest level of support was in the most recent year in the series: 2005. The positive trend continued to 2010, according to poll results obtained between 2004 and 2010 by EKOS Research Associates using a similar question. In July 2004, the proportion who supported current levels or higher was 63 percent, compared to 31 percent who thought there were too many immigrants. In April 2010, following a short but sharp recession, the proportion supporting current levels or higher was 67 percent, compared to 23 percent who thought there were too many immigrants (see figure 4).

Environics Research Group posed a somewhat different question over the period 1977 to 2010 (see figure 5). This question puts the issue in a more negative way: "Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: Overall there is too much immigration to Canada." From the late 1970s to the early 1990s, majorities agreed, either strongly or at least somewhat, presumably indicating negative attitudes toward immigration. However, in the mid-1990s, respondents began to disagree more strongly with the statement; and since 2000, clear majorities have

Figure 5: Canadian public opinion about immigration, 1977 to 2010: Environics



Source: Environics Institute (2010).
Note: The question asked was "Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: 'Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada.'"

disagreed. The most recent poll, conducted in 2010, showed a slight upward trend in agreement that there is too much immigration, but still a clear majority (58 percent) disagreed with the statement.

Since the late 1990s, both series have shown majority support for immigration, which is remarkable, since during this period the highest immigration levels have been maintained. The fact that there has been such a high level of support for more than a decade suggests that there is considerable stability in the pro-immigration perspective. For the first portion of the period since 1975, the data may show somewhat conflicting trends, possibly due to differences in the wording or meaning of the questions.[2] In any case, the polls all reflect the fact that Canadians have been generally positive toward immigration for more than a decade, a period during which immigration numbers were maintained at quite high levels.

There is, nevertheless, a degree of opposition to the existing immigration policy. It is a minority opinion, however, and although there are debates over the cultural values and practices of some immigrant groups, debate over immigration policy itself does not command much space on the political stage. One commentator, Martin Collacott, argues in a Fraser Institute publication that opposition to immigration is more significant, and that majority support is a "myth" (Collacott 2002, 39). The same point is made on the Web site of the Centre for Immigration Policy Reform (2011), with which Collacott is affiliated. Both sources claim that the proportion of Canadians supporting reduced immigration is larger than that supporting increased immigration. They focus only on those who want change and, inexplicably, ignore the large group who support the policy as it is, which in many years constitutes 50 to 60 percent. The fact is that those who want to reduce immigration levels in Canada are very clearly in the minority, and they have been for some time.

There is no basis for the conclusion that there has been a diminishment in support for immigration in the very recent period. Although the Environics series shows a slight downward trend in support for immigration between 2009 and 2010, the EKOS series shows no such trend. In any case, both sources support the view that any recent negative trends are relatively weak and have not affected the majority support for high immigration levels. It is possible, of course, that the financial crisis and the accommodation debate in Quebec have affected Canadians' support for immigration, but it would appear that their effect, if any, has been quite small. Predictions of a weakening in Canadian support for immigration and multiculturalism have often been wrong. Such predictions have been prominent in the media on several occa-

sions over the past two decades. One such occasion was the 1994 publication of Neil Bissoondath's *The Selling of Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*; another was the 9/11 terrorist attacks; and yet another was the June 2006 uncovering of a plot by a group of Muslim youths to bomb Parliament Hill and sites in downtown Toronto. None of these events had the predicted effect.

Analysis of Attitudes: Environics National Survey, November 2010

The most recent Environics Focus Canada survey also tapped a series of attitudes and perceptions specifically related to immigration and broader social and economic perspectives on Canadian life (Environics Institute 2010).[3] Support for current levels of immigration in Canada[4] is quite widely distributed across the country. There is majority support in every major region, and it is significantly higher in the Atlantic provinces (62.5 percent), Quebec (61.8 percent) and the Prairies (62.8 percent) than it is in Ontario (53.5 percent), Alberta (54.4 percent) and British Columbia (57.4 percent). The data also show that majorities favour immigration in the major cities with very high immigration levels (Toronto, 60.3 percent; Montreal, 62.7 percent; Vancouver, 56.4 percent).

Ethnicity and language have only a minor, if any, correlation with support for current levels of immigration. As might be inferred from the strong support for immigration in Quebec, support among francophone Canadians (64.2 percent) is higher than it is among anglophone Canadians (57.1 percent). There is majority support for immigration both among immigrants themselves (57.1 percent) and among the Canadian-born (58.4 percent). Immigrants born in Europe or the US support immigration more strongly (62.5 percent) than those born outside Europe or the US (54.9 percent); the latter are more often recent immigrants and visible minorities. One might expect that immigrants would be more likely to favour immigration, since not only are they its direct beneficiaries, but also they would have a vested interest in an open immigration policy that would help their own immigrant communities grow and develop. This does not appear to be the case. Perhaps some immigrants worry that more immigration will increase competition for jobs within immigrant-intensive sectors of the labour market or attract too much attention to the subject of immigration.

Education is the most important personal characteristic related to support for current levels of immigration. Of those who completed university, 69.3 percent support current levels of immigration, compared to only 43.0 percent of those who have a high school education or less. And university graduates are far less likely to oppose immigration: only 30.8 percent agree that there is too much immigration, compared to 57.0 percent of those with a high school education or less. Immigration is also favoured more often by men (63.3 percent) than by women (53.7 percent), and by younger persons rather than older ones (67.3 percent of those aged 18 to 29 and 63.4 percent of those aged 30 to 44, compared to 53.9 percent of those aged 45 to 59 and 55.9 percent of those aged 60 and older). Those who are employed full-time are much more supportive of immigration (63.6 percent), particularly compared to those who are unemployed (33.0 percent). Students and the self-employed are also more supportive of immigration (70.0 percent and 70.8 percent, respectively). The retired (53.1 percent) and those employed part-time (54.8 percent) are closer to evenly split on support for immigration.

Table 1: Analysis of support for immigration in Canada: correlation and multivariate regression coefficients[1]

		Regression coefficients for equations ...			
	Correlations	1	2	3	4
Demographic variables					
Young (0.0)	.10***	.05†	.03	−.08***	−.05*
Male (0.0)	.09***	.08***	.05**	.10***	.07***
Educated (1.3)	.23***	.23***	.12***	.10***	.07***
High income (12.0)	.12***	.01	−.02	−.00	−.01
Ontario (0.0)	−.07**	#	#	#	#
Eastern Canada (0.0)	.04†	.10***	.06**	.04	.04†
Quebec (0.0)	.04†	.09***	.01	.05*	.00
Prairies (0.0)	.03	.09***	.05*	.07***	.05*
Alberta (0.0)	−.01	.03	.03	.05*	.04*
British Columbia (0.0)	−.01	.05†	.03	.03	.03
Full-time employed (2.5)	.07**	#	#	#	#
Part-time employed (2.5)	−.03	−.02	−.03	−.03	−.03†
Unemployed (2.5)	−.09***	−.07***	−.02	−.05*	−.02
Self-employed (2.5)	.08***	.06**	.03†	.06**	.04*
Stay-at-home (2.5)	−.01	.02	.03†	.03	.03
Student (2.5)	.06**	.05*	.04*	.01	.02
Retired (2.5)	−.09***	−.02	−.03	−.04†	−.04†
Urban (0.0)	.04†	.02	−.02	−.03	−.04*
Canadian-born (0.3)	−.01	#	#	#	#
US/European-born (0.3)	.03	.03	−.02	.04*	.00
Non-European-born (0.3)	−.02	−.02	−.07***	−.01	−.04†
Economic views					
Immigrant-specific					
Positive economic contribution (3.0)	.42***		.27***		.19***
Don't take jobs away (2.3)	.52***		.40***		.29***
General					
Not worried about economy (1.0)	.11***		.02		.03
Situation better today (3.6)	.13***		.03		.01
Taxes support quality of life (3.3)	.18***		.05**		−.01
Social views					
Immigration-specific					
Multiculturalism important (38.8)[2]	.33***			.13***	.08***
Immigrants adopting values (3.3)	.45***			.23***	.17***
Immigrants needn't blend (3.4)	.22***			.01	−.01
Refugee claims mostly valid (12.7)	.40***			.18***	.15***
Nonwhite immigrants okay (1.8)	.32***			.17***	.08***
General					
Crime rate decreasing (6.0)	.26***			.07***	.05**
Support same-sex marriage (3.0)	.24***			.06**	.04†
Support abortion (2.3)	.11***			.00	−.01
Support gun control (3.1)	.15***			.01	.01
Oppose capital punishment (4.5)	.23***			.03	.02
Life better in Canada than the US (4.0)	.13***			.06***	.02
Adjusted R^2		.09	.37	.36	.46

Source: Environics Institute 2010.

Note: For wording of survey questions (nondemographic) see appendix A. Support for immigration is disagreement that there are "too many immigrants" in Canada, using a 5-point scale; many other variables also are reverse-coded.

[1] n = 1,941. Missing value (percentage) in parentheses; missing values imputed (see note 4).

[2] Multiculturalism item asked of only 1,264 respondents (see text and note 5).

†$p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$< p.01$ ***$p < .001$ # reference category

However, only among the unemployed does a majority — 57.0 percent — oppose immigration by agreeing that there is too much. In all other groups, the majority supports immigration.

In summary, across demographic groups, support for current levels of immigration is strongest among the highly educated, the young, those employed full-time and men. Support is

distributed widely across the country, in both urban and rural areas. Linguistic group (that is, French or English) affiliations are not major determinants of attitudes to immigration levels.

The Focus Canada survey also allows us to explore variations among the social groups just described and to examine how support for immigration is affected by economic and social viewpoints. The multivariate analysis is presented in table 1. The first column presents simple measures of statistical correlation between support for immigration and each of these demographic variables, economic viewpoints and social viewpoints. Subsequent columns present a series of regression equations with selected groups of variables included as predictors.[5] These analyses enable us to examine how the variables are related to each other in the processes underlying support for the present policy of sustaining high immigration levels in Canada. Persons with high incomes favour immigration; however, the regression result (equation 1, with all demographic variables in the equation) shows that the effect of income is explained by other demographic variables, notably levels of education (for income, ß = 0.01). The results here also show that when education and other demographic variables are considered, persons living in Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the Prairies are most supportive of immigration (ß = 0.09, or 0.10). The fact that younger Canadians more strongly support immigration is partly explained by their higher levels of education (for being young, ß = 0.05).

Bases of Support: Perceived Economic Benefits of Immigration

Canadians tend to view immigration as an economic opportunity for the country. At the time of the Focus Canada survey, November 2010, it appeared that Canada had emerged from recession, but considerable international economic instability remained. At the time, most Canadians — 82.0 percent, according to the survey — agreed that immigration had a positive impact on the economy. Relatively few — 25.0 percent — thought that immigrants would "take away jobs" from other Canadians. The first of these perceptions relates to the broader impact and the second to the potential impact on individuals who might be displaced. Both reflect a favourable view of immigration. The perceptions are linked and both are important sources of support for Canada's immigration policy. Together they account for a third of variations in attitudes ($R^2 = 0.35$ for an equation with just those variables, not shown).

The perception that immigration has a positive economic impact is found in all major regions of Canada, including the most prosperous ones, which receive a lot of immigrants (such as Ontario and British Columbia), and less prosperous regions (such as Atlantic Canada), where unemployment is relatively high and immigrants are sought in the hope that they will stimulate the economy and create employment. Although the perception that immigration has a positive economic impact is less pervasive among the unemployed, even they, according to the Focus Canada survey, have a generally positive view. Among unemployed Canadians, 68 percent see immigration as having a positive effect on the economy, and only 36 percent agree that immigrants take jobs from other Canadians.

Behind these economic perceptions of immigration are more general views about the direction of the Canadian economy and the respondent's situation within it. These perceptions also appear to be associated with positive views of immigration. Those who feel confident about the national economy and those who believe that their personal standard of living has improved

over the past decade number more frequently among immigration's supporters (r = .11 and .13, respectively; column 1 of table 1). The multivariate analysis (equation 2) suggests that this effect is due mainly, or even almost entirely, to the fact that these optimistic views foster the impression that immigration is having a positive impact. When the perceived economic impact of immigration is controlled, the effect of these more general views on the economy is reduced to insignificance. By the same token, those who are not doing well and think the economy is off-track are less inclined to think that immigration has a favourable impact.

Perceptions of the economic impact of immigration are also related to welfare state issues. Immigration may undermine support for the welfare state in many countries where immigrants are perceived as an unwanted burden (Soroka, Banting, and Johnston 2006). In Canada, the view that immigrants boost the economy might lead to an expectation that the taxes they pay will bolster publically funded programs. We would therefore expect supporters of the welfare state to take a more positive view of immigration. This expectation is confirmed by the fact that those who view taxes as important to maintaining the Canadian quality of life (the survey question mentioned health care, education and roads as representative tax-funded amenities) are more likely to support immigration (r = 0.18). By the same token, opponents of the welfare state also oppose immigration. In either case, the overall perception of the economic status of immigrants is a key consideration. In fact, the multivariate analysis (equation 2) shows that perceptions of the economic impact of immigration do explain much of the effect that welfare state perspectives have on immigration policy views. When these perceptions are part of the equation, the effect of welfare state perspectives is much reduced (ß = 0.05). The same holds true for those who have a more positive view of economic conditions in Canada generally: they are more likely to support immigration because they believe in its benefits.

The significance of economic factors to support for immigration in Canada suggests that an economic downturn would undermine such support. However, recent history does not confirm this. Since the early 1990s, economic recession in Canada has not produced a backlash against immigration. It is interesting to consider how belief in the economic benefits of immigration may have been affected by the Mulroney government's early-1990s decision to maintain high levels of immigration during a severe recession. Traditionally, immigration levels in Canada were reduced during recession years in deference to the belief that immigrants would be less welcome when jobs were scarce. However, during the recession of the early 1990s, which was particularly severe in Canada, immigration levels were kept more or less as they were as part of a long-range plan (Freeman 1992, 1152-4; see also Veugelers and Klassen 1994). There was little evidence of a backlash — on the contrary, as our earlier trend analysis has shown. Despite prolonged high rates of unemployment in the 1990s, immigration support actually increased during this period.

Bases of Support: Pride in Multiculturalism and Tolerance of Immigrant Cultures

Support for multiculturalism appears to be a strong force sustaining high levels of immigration in Canada. Focus Canada respondents were asked, "How important is the following

for the Canadian identity?" and one of the 13 items included was multiculturalism. Fully 86 percent of Focus Canada respondents felt that multiculturalism was either very important or at least somewhat important to the national identity. In a comparison of important national symbols, multiculturalism ranked behind national parks, health care, the flag, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (which were all identified as very or somewhat important by more than 90 percent of respondents); it ranked at about the same level as the national anthem, Canadian literature and music, and the RCMP (according to 80 to 89 percent of respondents); but it placed above hockey, bilingualism, the national capital, the CBC and the Queen (rated as very or somewhat important by less than 80 percent of respondents).[6] Multiculturalism seems to be widely viewed as a distinctive and important aspect of the country.

The Focus Canada data show that support for multiculturalism reinforces support for immigration. Respondents who cited the importance of multiculturalism were significantly more likely to support immigration. Of those who felt that multiculturalism was "very important" to national identity (a clear majority at 56.4 percent), 67.7 percent supported existing levels of immigration, compared to 49.6 percent of the smaller group who thought it was "somewhat important," and only 41.8 percent of the even smaller group (11.8 percent) who thought it was "unimportant." The correlation analysis in table 1 (column 1) shows the positive relation between support for multiculturalism and support for immigration ($r = 0.33$).

Despite support for multiculturalism, it is also clear that a large share of Canadians want immigrants to integrate fully into the social mainstream. They also are concerned that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values, and they worry about the implications. Respondents in the Focus Canada survey were asked whether or not they agreed that "Ethnic groups should try as much as possible to blend into Canadian society and not form a separate community." Nationally, an overwhelming 80.0 percent agreed, and 51.3 percent agreed "strongly." The percentages were even higher in Quebec — 90.4 percent; but they were also strong in the rest of Canada — 76.6 percent. In addition, a clear majority of Canadians — 68.4 percent — agreed that "There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values," and 40.3 percent said they "strongly agree." The wish for immigrants to blend in and the belief that they are not doing so tend to be associated with *less* enthusiasm for immigration (in table 1, $r = 0.22$ for disagreeing that blending in is important, and $r = 0.45$ for disagreeing that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values). These are thus important factors in qualifying support for immigration in Canada.

Racial attitudes also matter. The survey tapped into racial attitudes with a question on whether nonwhite immigrants should be allowed into Canada. Only a small group, 6.5 percent, expressed a desire to exclude nonwhites; the rest disagreed, 81.7 percent strongly so. These variations in racial attitudes are associated with overall attitudes to immigration ($r = 0.32$ in table 1). More respondents, 70.0 percent, were concerned that many refugee claims are not valid; this, too, is associated with less support for immigration ($r = 0.40$).

In recent years, Muslim immigrants have been a focus of concerns related to social and cultural integration. The Focus Canada survey asked, "Do you think most Muslims coming to our coun-

try today want to adopt Canadian customs and way of life or do you think they want to be distinct from the larger Canadian society?" A majority of respondents, 55.3 percent, thought that Muslims "want to be distinct," while only 27.9 percent thought they wanted to adopt Canadian customs (3.3 percent thought they wanted to do both, and 13.4 percent did not express an opinion). Another question asked about a potential ban on Muslim women wearing headscarves in public places, including schools, and respondents were about equally divided on whether it was a good idea or a bad idea. A slightly greater proportion, 47.6 percent, thought it was a good idea, compared to 43.9 percent who thought it was a bad idea. Generally, concern about the cultural integration of immigrants does not vary markedly by region. However, controversies regarding Muslims have been particularly notable in Quebec, and this is reflected in the Focus Canada results. In Quebec, 60.4 percent thought that Muslims want to be distinct from the larger Canadian society, compared to 53.7 percent in the rest of Canada. And in Quebec, 66.0 percent thought that banning Muslim women from wearing headscarves in public places is a good idea, compared to 41.5 percent in the rest of Canada.[7]

We should remember that a public opinion emphasis on blending and on integrating immigrants is far from new. Similar views have been found in many public opinion surveys since the 1970s. For example, a poll conducted by Decima Research in 1989 showed that substantial majorities of Canadians supported the idea of immigrant blending (Reitz and Breton 1994, 27-8). Respondents were asked, "What do you think is better for Canada, for new immigrants to be encouraged to maintain their distinct culture and ways, or to change their distinct culture and ways to blend into the larger society?" Only 34 percent of Canadians at the time favoured the maintenance of "distinct culture and ways." And even earlier, a national survey conducted in 1976 (Berry, Kalin, and Taylor 1977) — when most immigrants were of European backgrounds — showed that although most Canadians accepted cultural retention by minorities, the emphasis was still on the kind of cultural maintenance that would not affect mainstream society in any significant way (see the summary and discussion by Reitz 1980, 383-4). So, from the 1970s to the present, Canadians have clearly favoured immigrants becoming an integral part of the mainstream society.

The two viewpoints — support for multiculturalism and support for immigrant blending — are different and not necessarily contradictory. They are certainly not inconsistent in principle, since Canadian multiculturalism has always aimed to integrate minorities into the mainstream. Nevertheless, the issue has caused confusion. A *National Post* story on the November 2010 Angus Reid poll reported that 54 percent thought Canada should be a "melting pot" rather than a "mosaic." The story suggested that the public had repudiated multiculturalism, despite the fact that the same poll found that a majority, 55 percent, thought multiculturalism was good for Canada, compared to only 30 percent who thought it was bad. The author of the story suggested that Canadians seemed confused and had "no idea" what multiculturalism actually is ("Multiculturalism" 2010).

In interpreting such poll results, care should be taken to consider the true meaning of the questions. First, one should note that the questions do not provide respondents with a definition of "multiculturalism" or terms such as "melting pot," "mosaic," "blending," or "separate communities." Respondents are simply asked to select from the choices presented and are free

to interpret them as they wish. Second, and more significant, when questions present respondents with a binary choice between opposites — such as melting pot versus mosaic, or blending versus separate communities — supporters of multiculturalism may have difficulty, because it is precisely this binary choice that multiculturalism is intended to overcome: it offers, at least ideally, the potential for both integration *and* cultural maintenance. So, faced with what might be viewed as a philosophically inappropriate request to choose between them, many Canadian multiculturalism supporters may come down on the side of blending. Such a response choice does not necessarily imply a demand for complete immigrant assimilation or a repudiation of multiculturalism (though, of course, for some it may mean that). Third, one should note that immigrant blending is the outcome people would like to see; support for multiculturalism influences the criteria people may apply in assessing whether immigrant integration is working. The criteria may be less exacting for supporters of multiculturalism than for others. In sum, support for multiculturalism may be quite consistent with an emphasis on blending, if the latter is understood to include a degree of minority cultural maintenance. What is clear is that Canadians support both multiculturalism and the integration of immigrants into the mainstream of society.

To clarify how these viewpoints relate to one another in affecting support for immigration, we turn to the multivariate analysis (see table 1, equation 3). The results suggest that multiculturalism bolsters support for immigration by fostering a more open or flexible standard for assessing immigrant integration, leading people to believe more often that immigrants are meeting that standard. When all the immigrant-specific social items are combined, including both multiculturalism and perceptions of immigrants, all have smaller coefficients representing unique effects (comparing coefficients in equation 3 with correlations in the first column of table 1). This indicates that their impacts are interrelated. In particular, the smaller impact of the emphasis on multiculturalism as part of Canadian identity after controls indicates that multiculturalism is important partly because of its relation to other variables such as acceptance of separate communities and perceptions that immigrants are adopting Canadian values. Multiculturalism appears to moderate the impact of the desire for blending and concern about whether blending is occurring. The residual effect (ß = 0.13) of multiculturalism suggests that it has a distinct impact because it is an important national symbol. In accounting for support for immigration among Canadians, the overall effect of the immigrant-specific social views is only slightly less important than that of the immigrant-specific economic views ($R^2 = 0.28$ for social views, compared to 0.35 for economic views, for equations with only those variables, not shown in table).

Underlying Social Values and Attitudes to Immigration

Support for multiculturalism is not isolated from other social attitudes. Rather, it is part of a broader group of social attitudes, including support for the ban on capital punishment, gun-control legislation, same-sex marriage and access to abortion. In the survey data, these viewpoints are interrelated. Multiculturalism appears to be part of a social progressivism agenda; opposition to multiculturalism is associated with socially conservative values. Each of these items in the Focus Canada survey is also associated with support for immigration, with correlations ranging from $r = 0.11$ to $r = 0.23$. Another related viewpoint is that crime rates are decreasing; this is also associated with support for immigration ($r = 0.26$).

It is interesting, also, that the views of Canadians on these issues are related to attitudes toward the United States, and in this way are linked to questions of Canadian national identity. The Canadian discourse makes frequent reference to a presumed contrast between the Canadian cultural mosaic and the American melting pot, and Canadian pride in multiculturalism may be to some extent reinforced by its role in defining Canadian identity vis-à-vis the United States (see Reitz and Breton 1994, 34). Could national pride affect attitudes toward immigration by reinforcing support for multiculturalism? Similar questions could be asked about some of the social values mentioned earlier, such as gun control or capital punishment. If these social values also contribute to national pride, then they, too, may affect attitudes toward immigration.

Although the Focus Canada responses related to preference for the Canadian quality of life over the American quality of life (see the appendix for the question wording) are highly skewed toward a preference for the Canadian (89.9 percent), there are interrelations with other variables. Multiculturalism supporters more often prefer the Canadian quality of life. Among those who believe that multiculturalism is "very important" to the national identity, the proportion preferring the Canadian to the American quality of life is 95.4 percent, whereas among those who feel that multiculturalism is not at all important, the figure drops to 83.1 percent. Those who support gun control and a ban on capital punishment also tend to prefer the Canadian quality of life. In these patterns, there appear to be implications for attitudes toward immigration, since the survey results also show a small but significant relation between pride in the Canadian quality of life and support for immigration ($r = 0.13$).

The multivariate analysis provides a number of insights into the relation between general social attitudes, those specific to immigration and support for immigration. To some extent, general social attitudes have an impact because they influence perceptions of immigration. This inference is supported by the fact that the effects of all or most social-values items are significantly reduced when immigrant-specific perceptions and expectations are included in the analysis (not separately shown; the pattern holds for all social-values items except that related to abortion). At the same time, some social-values items have significant effects even with the immigration-specific variables in the analysis, indicating that they have an effect on immigration attitudes for other reasons as well (equation 3). Those who believe that the crime rate is decreasing, those who support same-sex marriage and those who prefer Canadian lifestyles over American are more likely to support immigration, regardless of their immigration-specific beliefs. These effects are something of a surprise. It may be that these items reflect a general level of comfort with social change and personal security, leading to an easier acceptance of immigration and its impact on Canadian society.

Social Dynamics of Canadian Support for Immigration

Both the economic and social viewpoints that underlie support for immigration in Canada are important, and the multivariate analysis also suggests that their effects are interrelated. As indicated earlier, perceptions of the economic benefits of immigration account for about one-third of the variation in support for immigration ($R^2 = 0.32$). A more general economic optimism, reflected in the view that the Canadian economy is strong, and also based on a positive personal economic situation, supports these positive views of the economic benefits of immigration. Multiculturalism and acceptance of immigrant cultures are also impor-

tant, with an only slightly smaller cumulative effect than the effect of the economic variables ($R^2 = 0.28$). Canadian multiculturalism is related to a generally progressive social outlook that appears to lead to greater acceptance of the cultural diversity resulting from immigration.

When the effects of the economic and sociocultural variables are included together with all other predictors (table 1, equation 4), the effects are only partly additive (combined $R^2 = 0.43$). This means that social attitudes that promote a more positive view of immigration also influence economic views of immigration; the reverse may also be true — namely, that those who favour immigration for economic reasons are more likely to have adopted a positive view of its social impact.

The interrelation of economic and social viewpoints is also reflected in the connection between support for the welfare state and pro-immigration sentiment. The welfare state variable was included in the economic group of variables, but of course it is partly a social value, and its effect reflects the impact of socially progressive views. When these variables are included in the analysis, the impact of support for the welfare state on pro-immigration attitudes is reduced to zero.

The fact that these economic and social forces influence each other may be of considerable importance to our understanding of the stability of immigration attitudes in Canada over time. The potential effect of economic cycles on perceptions of the economic role of immigrants may be moderated by the fact that social values support continuing immigration. The fact that the employment situation of immigrants has become more difficult might have altered perceptions of the economics of immigration as this has become well known among the general population, but this does not appear to have happened. Evidence based on experience during recessions — including, as mentioned earlier, the most recent recession and the recession of the early 1990s — suggests that belief in immigration as an opportunity for Canada is quite resilient and not vulnerable to rapid change. However, a major change in the economic perception of immigration still could occur if the popular view of immigration were affected by immigrants' continued difficulty in finding employment, or if a perception emerged that illegal immigration is increasing dramatically; such a change could have long-term effects and be difficult to reverse.

Political Parties and Canadian Immigration Policy

The traditional association of immigration with the Liberal Party has broken down, and today all major Canadian political parties compete to be seen as pro-immigration. The Conservatives under Brian Mulroney maintained high immigration numbers and were responsible for legislation supporting multiculturalism and employment equity. The Western Canada-based Reform Party was seen as representing social conservatism and, perhaps unfairly, reluctant to support immigration. However, while the Conservative government elected in 2006 after incorporating supporters of the Reform Party has shown less enthusiasm for multiculturalism, it has a strongly pro-immigration policy that emphasizes immigration's economic value (as reflected in the immigration numbers in figure 2). Moreover, the Conservatives explicitly courted certain immigant and ethnic groups in the 2011 federal election campaign.

Table 2: Analysis of support for immigration in Canada, including party preference as predictors (correlations and multivariate regression coefficients)[1]

		Regression coefficients for equations...			
	Correlations	1	2	3	4
Party preference					
Liberal Party	.06*	#	#	#	#
Conservative Party	−.17***	−.15***	−.18***	−.09***	.00
New Democratic Party	.09**	.04	.02	.03	.02
Bloc Québécois	.06*	.02	.00	.03	.06*
Green Party	.01	.02	−.04	−.01	−.02
Adjusted R^2		.03	.11	.38	.46

Source: Environics Institute 2010.
[1] n = 1,933; missing values imputed (see note 4).
Note: Equation 1 includes only party preference, equation 2 also includes demographic variables, equation 3 also includes economic views, and equation 4 adds social views (with specific variables as in table 1).
† $p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$< p.01$ ***$p < .001$ # reference category

Looking at the results of the Focus Canada survey, one can examine the implications of public opinion for the political dynamics of immigration policy. How are political party supporters positioned on immigration, and what are the implications for future trends?

The data show that Conservative supporters are significantly less likely to support current levels of immigration than are supporters of other major parties (Liberal Party support is the reference category in this analysis) (table 2). The Liberals and the Bloc Québécois are relatively strong supporters of immigration, the New Democrats even more so. The data also suggest some of the reasons. Demographic variations related to education, region or employment status are not major explananatory variables (compare equations 1 and 2 of table 2; most party effects remain unchanged when demographic variables are introduced). Rather, it is the economic and social perspectives on immigration that explain the stance of a given party's supporters on the issue. In particular, the position of Conservative Party supporters appears to be related in part to their less-frequent perception of the economic value of immigration in the survey responses. As well, Conservative Party supporters show less enthusiasm for multiculturalism, express more strongly the view that immigrants should blend into mainstream society and worry more often that immigrants are not adopting Canadian values. The multivariate analysis shows that these variables explain Conservative Party supporters' greater opposition to current immigration levels.

Conclusions and Discussion

The analysis in this study points to five main conclusions. First, Canadian public opinion continues to support immigration quite strongly. Across the country, there is broad support in the contexts of region, urban and rural communities, and the two major linguistic communities. This support has been particularly strong in the past 15 to 20 years, when immigration levels have been relatively high. There is some social variation: for example, support for current levels of immigration is strongest among more educated Canadians, the young, the fully employed and men. However, the breadth of support is remarkable, and — with the exception of the unemployed — economic disadvantage does not tend to lead most Canadians to oppose immigration.

Second, there are both economic and cultural motivations for this support. A large proportion of Canadians seems convinced of the economic benefits of immigration; they also accept multiculturalism as part of the national identity and accordingly support the continuance of relatively high levels of immigration. These twin pillars work together to support immigration as an important nation-building strategy for Canadians. Immigrants are seen in fairly pragmatic terms as major building blocks for the future; they help keep the country prosperous and develop its cultural and social potential.

Third, both social and economic views of immigration are rooted in some of the more basic outlooks that prevail in Canada. On the economic side, Canadians tend to take an optimistic and expansionist view of their economic future as citizens of Canada and as private individuals. This optimism is a basic feature of their support for immigration. On the social and cultural side, Canadian multiculturalism is related to other socially progressive views that prevail in the country. Canada was one of the first countries to recognize gay marriage, and its laws on abortion, gun control and capital punishment distinguish it from its southern neighbour. Many Canadians are proud of this distinction, and national pride plays into support for multiculturalism. The result is that the country's immigration program has become part of the mix of progressive public policies that for many are linked to the Canadian identity.

Fourth, social and economic perspectives on immigration are interrelated. Those who support multiculturalism and the progressive social agenda are more likely also to cite the economic value of immigration; and those who believe in the economic benefits of immigration and share economic optimism are more likely to support multiculturalism.

And fifth, many supporters of all the major political parties are pro-immigration. Conservative Party supporters are the least so, mainly because they are less enthusiastic about multiculturalism and more often espouse socially conservative views. Supporters of the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democrats are all pro-immigration, sharing positive views on both economic and social issues. Although Bloc supporters endorse multiculturalism less strongly, their overall support for immigration is relatively high.

Canadians' views on immigration stand in marked contrast to those found in most European countries — countries that are latecomers to immigration. People in these countries may see immigration either as an unwelcome occurrence or as something to be avoided except to fulfill occasional specific needs. Canadians' views on immigration also contrast with those found in the United States, another country that has traditionally embraced immigration; today, however, the US is a superpower that no longer sees immigration as critical to its destiny. Immigration debates in the US focus almost entirely on the undocumented population. America's proportion of legal immigrants is much smaller relative to population than Canada's, and legal immigration in the US is directed more toward family reunification than economic development. Immigration issues in Canada are often discussed in terms of multiculturalism, and the analysis here confirms that support for multiculturalism gives a major boost to the country's immigration program.

The fact that so many Canadians support multiculturalism does not mean that they do not want immigrants to blend in, although this contrast is often drawn in media and academic discussions. Even among supporters of multiculturalism, there is a desire for immigrants to become part of mainstream society. This is important to the meaning and purpose of multiculturalism in Canada: it is a strategy to encourage the incorporation of immigrants. Support for multiculturalism and immigration also does not mean that racism is absent in Canada. The data clearly show that racism does affect attitudes to immigration. However, multiculturalism in Canada — and, to some extent, antiracist views — foster support for immigration by encouraging a more open or tolerant view of the process of immigrant integration.

The multiple sources of support for immigration may be an important reason for the stability of pro-immigration sentiment in Canada over time. Concerns are occasionally expressed that either economic or social issues may be undermining support for immigation. The primary importance of the economic agenda, and the fact that it carries so much weight in both English and French Canada and across many social groups, suggest that high levels of immigration will be part of Canadian policy for some time to come. However, there could be a very prolonged recession, or clear signs could emerge that immigrants are experiencing economic difficulty and require attention and possibly significant public expenditure, or there could be a dramatic increase in illegal immigration: any of these occurrences could threaten pro-immigration sentiment by undermining positive perceptions of the economic value of immigration. In such a situation, the social views of immigration — the issues of culture and multiculturalism, and progressive social values generally — could help to stabilize pro-immigration attitudes, since social views have been as important as economic views. On the other hand, if there is major social conflict or breakdown within immigrant minority communities, increasing crime in specific immigrant communities or terrorist activity, confidence in the idea that multiculturalism helps foster Canadian unity could erode. This, in turn, could affect attitudes to immigration. In the face of a number of potential challenges, the multiple forms of support for immigration that exist in Canada have served as an important source of the long-term stability of pro-immigration sentiment.

Appendix: Selected variables, questions, and frequencies: Focus Canada, 2010		
Variable name	**Question**	**Frequency (%)**
Immigration support (reverse-coded)	Q53a Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements? — Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada.	Strongly agree, 18.8; somewhat agree, 20.9; somewhat disagree, 30.3, strongly disagree, 25.6; neither, .4; DK/NA, 3.9
Economic views		
Immigrant-specific Positive economic contribution	Q53g Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements? — Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada.	Strongly agree, 38.1; somewhat agree, 40.6; somewhat disagree, 10.7; strongly disagree, 7.4; neither, .1; DK/NA, 3.0
Don't take jobs away (reverse-coded)	Q53e Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements? — Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians.	Strongly agree, 9.9; somewhat agree, 13.9; somewhat disagree, 31.2; strongly disagree, 42.5; neither, .1; DK/NA, 2.3
General Not worried about economy (reverse-coded)	Q4 Considering the overall economic situation in Canada, would you say that you are...?	Very worried, 6.5; worried, 35.1; not too worried, 45.4; not at all worried, 11.9; DK/NA, 1.0
Situation better today	Q7 Thinking about your standard of living, would you say that compared with 10 years ago, you are generally better off, worse off or about the same?	Better off, 44.1; about the same, 34.4; worse off, 19.9; depends, .2; DK/NA, 1.4
Taxes support quality of life	Q10 Some people think of taxes as mostly a positive thing because they are how we pay for the important things that make our quality of life good, such as health care, education and roads. Other people think of taxes as mostly a negative thing because they take money out of peoples's pockets and hold back economic growth and the creation of wealth. (Note: The order of the options was selected at random to neutralize order effects.)	Mostly positive, 69.9; mostly negative, 22.5; both equally true, 1.6; depends, 1.6; DK/NA, 2.5
Social views		
Immigration-specific Immigrants adopting values (reverse-coded)	Q53f Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements? — There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values.	Strongly agree, 40.4; somewhat agree, 26.9; somewhat disagree, 18.1; strongly disagree, 11.3; neither, .1; DK/NA, 3.1
Immigrants needn't blend (reverse-coded)	Q55a Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements — Ethnic groups should try as much as possible to blend into Canadian society and not form a separate community.	Strongly agree, 49.9; somewhat agree, 27.9; somewhat disagree, 13.0; strongly disagree, 5.8; DK/NA, .7
Multiculturalism important	Q20f How important are the following to the Canadian identity? — Multiculturalism	Very important, 54.0; somewhat important, 30.9; not very important, 7.0; not at all important, 5.9; DK/NA, 2.2 (n = 1,264)

Appendix: Selected variables, questions, and frequencies: Focus Canada, 2010 (cont.)

Variable name	Question	Frequency (%)
Refugee claims mostly valid (reverse-coded)	Q53b Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements? — Many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees.	Strongly agree, 29.8; somewhat agree, 30.2; somewhat disagree, 16.9; strongly disagree, 9.8; neither, .5; DK/NA, 12.7
Nonwhite immigrants okay (reverse-coded)	Q53c Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements? — Nonwhites should not be allowed to immigrate to Canada	Strongly agree, 2.9; somewhat agree, 3.7; somewhat disagree, 12.7; strongly disagree, 78.9; neither, .1; DK/NA, 1.8
General		
Crime rate decreasing	Q58 Some people say that crime rates in Canada are decreasing and that it's mainly the dramatic crime stories in the media that are upsetting people. Other people say that crime in Canada is really worse than it was before. Which of these points of view comes closest to your own?	Crime rates are decreasing, 35.6; crime is worse than before, 53.5; crime rates are staying the same, 4.9; DK/NA, 6.0
Support same-sex marriage	Q64 In 2005, Parliament passed a law changing the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose this law?	Strongly support, 39.1; somewhat support, 26.2; somewhat oppose, 9.6; strongly oppose, 21.1; neither, .9; DK/NA, 3.0
Support abortion	Q65 Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement? — Every woman who wants to have an abortion should be able to have one.	Strongly agree, 49.7; somewhat agree, 23.3; somewhat disagree, 8.3; strongly disagree, 15.4; depends, 1.0; DK/NA, 2.3
Support gun control	Q61a As you may know, there are federal laws in Canada concerning the ownership of firearms. In general, do you support or oppose this law?	Strongly support, 54.4; somewhat support, 20.1; somewhat oppose, 8.2; strongly oppose, 13.4; neither, .8; DK/NA, 3.1
Oppose capital punishment	Q63 Would you say that you are in favour of capital punishment for certain crimes or are you against capital punishment under any circumstances?	In favour for certain crimes, 53.9; opposed under any circumstance, 41.6; DK/NA, 4.5
Life better in Canada than in the US	Q8 When you think about Canada and the US, which country would you say maintains a better quality of life for its citizens?	Canada, 89.9; US, 3.6; no difference, 1.7; depends, .8; DK/NA, 4.0

Source: Environics Canada (2010).
Note: DK: dont know; NA: not applicable.

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Notes

1 Trudeau's famous speech introducing multiculturalism policy (Parliament of Canada 1971) explicitly put forward certain goals. These included supporting the growth and development of minority cultural groups while promoting their integration into society.

2 While the Gallup and EKOS polls show majority support in this earlier period as well, the Environics polls show lower levels of support. Regarding wording, the Gallup and EKOS polls present respondents with a neutral choice between various options, whereas the Environics polls request agreement with a negative opinion that there is "too much" immigration. A positive response bias could be at work in the Environics polls — that is, a tendency among some survey respondents to agree with any statement offered by an interviewer out of politeness rather than expressing a genuine opinion. If such a bias were discounted, one might infer that over the past three decades Canadian attitudes toward immigration have been more positive than the Environics poll data indicate. However, this would not explain why the Environics polls show a significant change over time while the Gallup-EKOS series does not.

3 See the appendix for a list of all nondemographic variables used in this analysis, including question wording and response frequencies with nonresponse included; immigration support and certain other variables are reverse-coded so coefficients can be interpreted in terms of positive effects of each variable on support for immigration.

4 As noted earlier, the survey question on immigration policy had a negative bias. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that "Overall, there is too much immigration in Canada," and 58.2 percent disagreed, including 26.7 percent who disagreed strongly. Such disagreement over the statement that there is "too much immigration" is taken as *support* for Canada's immigration policy. On the other side, those who agreed with the statement were the opponents. In the 2010 survey, 41.3 percent agreed that there was too much immigration, including 19.5 percent who agreed strongly. The survey sample number was 2,020; those respondents with valid responses to the question on "too much immigration" numbered 1,941. All percentages in the text are based on valid responses.

5 Variables representing region, employment status and birthplace are dummy variables. The omitted categories are Ontario, full-time employment and Canadian birthplace, respectively. In the analysis, missing values are estimated using multiple imputation procedures (Graham 2009), where missing values are imputed based on regression equations using all variables in the model.

6 Note that each respondent was presented with only a random selection of items in this series, and the number of respondents assessing the multiculturalism item was n=1,264. As explained in note 5, regression-based imputation procedures were used to provide estimates for missing values. However, because of the large number of missing values in this case, two additional tests were conducted to assess reliability and the possibility of multiculturalism-item subsample bias. First, the analysis without the multiculturalism variable was conducted both on the entire sample and on the item subsample, and the results were virtually identical. This indicates that there are likely few differences in the subsample not related to the multiculturalism variable. Second, the entire analysis including the multiculturalism variable was repeated on the multiculturalism-item subsample. Again the results were virtually identical. This indicates that the imputation procedure does not affect the substantive results obtained. Both sets of test results are available from the author on request.

7 In a similar vein, a 2007 SES-*Policy Options* survey showed that Quebecers were considerably more opposed than Canadians in general to having "public places like schools, hospitals and government buildings" accommodate religious and cultural minorities, including through the provision of prayer spaces (MacDonald 2007). In a CROP survey, also conducted in 2007 but only in Quebec, 74 percent of respondents were opposed to providing flexible working hours to accommodate the practices of different religions (Seidle 2009, 95).

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